

For Immediate Release:

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**National Women's Day: Honouring the Legacy, Acknowledging the Struggles, and Empowering the Future.**

Each year, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, South Africans from all walks of life come together to celebrate National Women's Day. This day commemorates a pivotal moment in our history, the march of 1956, when 20 000 courageous women united in Pretoria to protest against the oppressive pass laws. This year, we commemorate National Women's Day under the theme: **"Celebrating 30 years of democracy Towards Women's Development."** This theme fits very well within the 30 years of the Women's Charter, which was established to drive equality.

Led by icons such as Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Lilian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa and Helen Joseph, these women took a bold stand against the Urban Areas Act of 1950. Their actions demonstrated unparalleled bravery and left an indelible mark on our nation's journey towards equality. Their anthem, **"Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo"** translating to **"You Strike a woman, You Strike a Rock"**, continues to resonate as a powerful testament to their strength and resolve.

As we reflect on this historic event, we must also recognise the ongoing challenges that women in South Africa face today. Despite the progress made, women, including asylum seeker, refugee, and migrant women, are still confronted by degrading obstacles. The prevalence of gender-based violence remains a grave concern. Women and girls continue to be subjected to abuse, assault, and domestic violence at alarming rates. Furthermore, women are still disproportionately affected by poverty and unemployment in our contemporary societies as they lack access to economic opportunities and resources. Access to healthcare services especially sexual reproductive health service remains uneven, with mostly migrant women facing barriers to essential health services. Girls and young women often face challenges in accessing quality education due to socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and safety concerns.

CoRMSA stands committed to advocating for the rights of all women, regardless of their nationality or race statuses in addressing these dignity degrading challenges. On this National Women's Day, we call upon all South Africans to honour the legacy of the 1956 march by actively working towards gender equality, justice and women empowerment. We urge the relevant authorities to strengthen the justice system to provide better protection and support for victims, ensure equal access to education and employment, improve the overall well-being of women, and invest in education for girls, for their empowerment and to achieve comprehensive women's development.

Let us celebrate the achievements of women, acknowledge the ongoing struggles, and commit to creating a society where every woman and girl can live free from fear, with equal opportunities to thrive. **"Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo"**.



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